

**St Michael with St Thomas
C of E Primary School**



Lost Child Policy

Date approved: Summer 2017

Review Date: Summer 2020

LOST CHILD POLICY

STATEMENT OF INTENT

In the event of a child becoming lost, while in the care of the school, we will immediately put into place the procedures detailed below. These ensure that a systematic approach to find the child is taken and consideration is given to the levels of risk to the child.

AIM

We will ensure a search is made for the child as soon as they are discovered missing, parents and authorities are notified at the appropriate stage, and a high level of care is maintained to other children whilst procedures are followed.

PROCEDURES

If a child goes missing from school:

- The Headteacher will be informed.
- The teacher in charge will carry out a thorough search of all the rooms in the building, outside on the playground and the perimeter of school grounds.
- All staff not directly working with a class will be asked to search the school.
- The remaining children from the missing child's class will be gathered together and registered to check no one else is missing. The children will be asked whether they have seen the child who is missing, as will all adults, so it can be established who was last to see the missing child, when and where.
- The doors and gates will be checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- The teacher in charge will talk to staff to establish what has happened.
- If the child is not found the parent or carer is contacted and the missing child reported to the police.
- If the child lives within walking distance of the group, one adult should make the journey on foot in order to catch up with the child if possible.

If a child goes missing from an outing, the school ensures the following procedures are put into place.

- As a child is noticed missing, the group leader will perform a head count to ensure that no other child is missing. A member of staff will search the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.
- The person in overall charge will be informed and the Head teacher will be informed and make their way to the venue.
- Assistance will be sought from the venue to make a thorough search.
- The police will be called.
- Parents will be informed from school
- In an indoor venue, the staff will contact venue security who will handle the search and contact the police if the child isn't found.

When the child is found

- A member of staff will care for and talk to and reassure the child.
- Other adults present will speak to all children to reinforce the need not to leave the premises and why.

After the incident

- The teacher will sensitively discuss with the child's parents and the events surrounding the disappearance of the child.
- If appropriate, a letter will be sent reassuring parents.
- Staff will be asked not to speak to the media.

The investigation

- The Head teacher will carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all staff present at the time.
- The teacher will write an incident report detailing:
 - The date and time of the incident
 - Staff/children present
 - When child was last seen and by whom
 - The date and time of the report
 - What action has been taken since
- A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.
- If the incident warrants a police investigation all staff will co-operate fully. In this case the police will handle all aspects of the investigation.
- The Health & Safety Officer in the Local Authority will be informed.
- School will keep full details of the incident.

Missing from Education

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full-time education which is suitable to their age, ability, and any special educational needs they may have. Local authorities have a legal duty to identify, as far as it is possible to do so, the identity of children of compulsory school age children who are missing education in their area and to get the back into education.

A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. School staff should follow procedures for dealing with children that go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future. It is essential all staff are alert to signs to look out for and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of potential safeguarding concerns such as travelling to conflict zones, FGM and force marriage.

The law requires all schools to have an admission register.

All schools must inform their local authority of any pupil who is going to be deleted from the admission register where they:

- Have been taken out of school by their parents and are being educated outside the school system i.e. home education.
- Have been permanently excluded.

All schools must inform the local authority of any pupil who is absent from school without school's permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more. See Attendance Policy.

Notification and Referral Route

If a child becomes missing from education the Education Welfare Services should be contacted and a Child Missing Education (CME) Form completed.

Children at particular risk of CME:

- Children at risk of harm/neglect
- Children of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) families
- Research has shown that many children from these families can become disengaged from education, particularly during the secondary school phase. It is therefore important that schools inform the local authority when a GRT pupil leaves the school without identifying a new destination school, particularly in the transition from primary to secondary so that they can attempt to facilitate continuity of the child's education
- Children of Service Personnel
- Families of members of the Armed Forces are likely to move frequently – both in the UK and overseas and often at short notice
- Missing children and runaways
- Children who go missing or run away from home or care may be in serious danger and are vulnerable to crime, sexual exploitation or abduction as well as missing education
- Children and young people supervised by the Youth Justice System
- Children who have offended or are at risk of doing so are also at risk of disengaging from education Children who cease to attend a school

There are many reasons why a child stops attending a school. It could be because the parent chooses to home educate their child. However, where the reason for a child who has stopped attending a school is not known, the local authority should investigate the case and satisfy itself that the child is receiving suitable education.

- Children of new migrant families

Children of new migrant families may not have yet settled into a fixed address or may have arrived into a local authority area without the authority becoming aware, therefore increasing the risk of the child missing education.